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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3180
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0399
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 1007
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0038
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 1655
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 9860
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 1324
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0446
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0966
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0350
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1727
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY 0785
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 3262
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0813
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY 0594
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 0288
RUEHMI/USOFFICE FRC FT LAUDERDALE PRIORITY 2816
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000397

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: BOSTON GROUP FUTURE MURKY

REF: A. CARACAS 00298

[1](#)B. CARACAS 00332

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARK A WELLS FOR 1.4 (D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) With the current climate of bilateral relations, post is not optimistic about the future of the US-Venezuelan bipartisan legislative forum, known as the Boston Group (BG). Even before President Chavez' February 2 and 4 speeches (ref a and b), post was unable to secure meetings with National Assembly (AN) deputies, including lower-profile Chavistas with whom we talked during previous tense times, despite receiving signals of interest in re-starting the group. Former BG opposition deputy Pedro Diaz Blum, who still talks to many pro-government legislators, told Poloff that several deputies were interested in talking to Emboffs, but are probably waiting for a cooling of bilateral tensions lest they be perceived as betraying Chavez. After testing the waters, we do not plan to press Boston Group members, but will occasionally probe for their openness as appropriate. End Summary.

Deputies Answer 1 out of 7 Meeting Requests

[1](#)2. (C) During Representative William Delahunt's August 31-September 2, 2005 visit, pro-government National Assembly (AN) deputies Saul and Calixto Ortega praised the work of the US-Venezuelan bipartisan legislative forum, known as the

Boston Group (BG), and expressed interest in re-energizing it during the next AN session. After the December 2005 legislative elections, then-AN First Vice President Ricardo Gutierrez also heralded the BG, and asked Polcouns whether he thought the group could be reconstituted, despite the opposition's absence in the new legislature.

¶3. (C) Since the AN's installation January 5, however, Post has tried to reach out to several remaining BG members, with little success. Of the seven requests we have made for meetings with pro-government legislative contacts, only one has resulted in a meeting. In one case, PolCouns received a call from the assistant of AN deputy Saul Ortega (MVR-Carabobo), who also heads the AN's Foreign Policy Committee, canceling a meeting as PolCouns was walking to the deputy's office. In another incident, the DCM invited BG members to lunch at his residence, but had to cancel the morning of the event when no one had responded. A member of AN President Maduro's staff later told Poloff, rather unconvincingly, that it was an apparent miscommunication.

Fear of Chavez Looms Large

¶4. (C) On February 1, Poloff met with former Boston Group member Pedro Diaz Blum, who is still in contact with some pro-government AN deputies. According to Blum, several deputies want to meet with the Embassy, but fear upsetting Chavez. In fact, Blum said, MVR deputy Elvis Amoroso (Aragua) had submitted a proposal to create a new US-Venezuela Friendship Committee, but Maduro was sitting on the idea, presumably waiting for bilateral tensions to cool

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off. Former BG President Calixto Ortega (MVR-Zulia), who has been a frequent Embassy contact, was proposed to lead the group, but Blum sensed Ortega had been cowed. Blum speculated that meetings might be possible again in a few months when Chavez' current accusations and anti-US rhetoric might have passed. (Note: Blum, though no longer a deputy, is one of few opposition figures respected by the MVR and can be a credible interlocutor with legislative officials. Venamcham has offered him a contract to assist their efforts to mediate between US and Venezuelan congressional members this year as well.)

Comment

¶5. (C) The strength of the Boston Group had been the inclusion of pro-Chavez and opposition legislators--a point negated by the Chavistas' 100-percent hold on the new AN. The timidness of pro-Chavez deputies in refusing to meet with us is another example of the continued blurring of the lines between the executive and legislative branches, and the deliberate closing down of communication between the government and Embassy. Whether they have been ordered not to meet with us or--more likely--are simply afraid of getting crosswise with Chavez, the effect is the same. We neither plan to encourage or discourage the group's re-creation, but will periodically reach out to remaining BG members and will respond to any requests we may receive.

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